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PROFESSIONAL COURSES IN THE STATE NORMAL SCHOOL

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As a result of scientific study of schoolroom processes, a new science of teaching is rapidly emerging out of the traditionalism which has characterized the educational practice of the past. Opinions, beliefs, and faiths as the basis of educational procedure are rapidly being replaced by definite objective facts and verifiable data. Every method and every theory on which the work of the schools is based as well as the entire content of education are under the necessity of justifying themselves by proving that they have a demonstrable foundation and are capable of producing definite effects of value upon the pupils.

It is but natural that the presence of this scientific attitude and the consequent inevitable readjustments which it is bound to produce in the work of the schools everywhere should make imperative certain readjustments in the curricula of teacher-training institutions. One phase of the reorganization which is taking place rapidly in the case of state normal schools is represented by the newer types of professional courses which have come into these schools in the last few years. This article is a discussion of the arrangement and a description of the content of the professional courses, in the several differentiated curricula, in the form in which they are now in operation in the State Normal School at Oshkosh.

There are four principles on which these courses are based. These are set forth below in somewhat arbitrary fashion as a statement of the guiding principles on which the courses are organized and administered.

1. *Specific and definite instruction in theory and methods of teaching should be given.* In some parts of the country a few years ago the idea prevailed that normal schools should seek general development of the individual along broad lines and the inculcation of broad general principles of education with little emphasis upon definite instruction in the specific technique of teaching and the management of schools. However, this finally broke down in

practice. While graduates of institutions which accepted this principle and based their work upon this idea possessed alertness of mind and enthusiasm for teaching and many other qualities which were desirable in teachers, they knew so little about specific school-room procedure, involving many matters upon which detailed and specific knowledge is necessary, that for several years after they began teaching their work fell far short of what might properly be expected of a person skilled in the practice of a profession. Just as a physician, confronted with a case of appendicitis, and an engineer, engaged in building a bridge, have to possess a great deal of detailed and definite knowledge of what to do, so a trained teacher must have specific information on a great number of matters of procedure as well as a good degree of skill in execution.

2. Methods of teaching can be taught most economically only in connection with practice. It is believed to be a fundamentally wrong principle to teach, in the first year of the normal-school curriculum, a large amount of the theory of education in the abstract and then expect the students to apply it in their practice teaching, which usually comes in the next year. Many normal schools, however, give in the first year to young high-school graduates, the most of whom have never taught and who have scarcely even been inside of an elementary school since they were pupils, detailed theoretical courses in special methods of teaching the various studies of the elementary curriculum. This is often for the purpose of exploiting some special method in which the school believes. Courses of this kind are uneconomical and wasteful and in a large measure they are meaningless to the students. The normal school, therefore, should carry on practice and theory simultaneously, or as nearly so as possible.

The principles of teaching may be learned largely by purposeful activities—by actual application of them in teaching. Experience indicates that a very large part of the teaching in the training school can be done by the normal-school students, with practically no loss of efficiency, if the work is properly organized and handled. It is necessary that there be in the training school a sufficient supply of critic teachers and supervisors of especial ability. They should be the strongest teachers who can be found, and they should receive high enough salaries to retain their services from year to year. The normal-school students should learn to teach under their direction.

The young student-teachers should have much opportunity to observe high-grade teaching and much opportunity to practice under close supervision. They should observe, discuss, practice, observe again, discuss again, and practice again, under the direction of critic teachers and supervisors until the ability to teach effectively and manage a school properly has been attained. After sufficient ability to teach has been developed, the student-teachers should take full charge of rooms and classes as in actual school work.

As this work is arranged at Oshkosh, the practice teaching is under the charge of a director of training who organizes the critic teachers and special supervisors of practice into a force of supervisors and assigns to each a group of student-teachers while she herself exercises a careful supervision over their work and organizes and directs the entire work of the training school.

Under this plan the student-teachers study their pedagogy, school organization and management, and the content of the school program at the time that they are doing their practice teaching. The time in the senior year is about equally divided between teaching and professional study of this kind. Under this arrangement much less class study of special methods of teaching is found to be necessary, for the reason that the student-teachers are taught how to teach by the critic teachers and supervisors under whom they work. This is the plan followed in hospital training schools which are believed to be more effective in their training than are normal schools. The professional study which normal school students carry on should be of a vastly more scientific type than the mere drill in special methods too often found in these courses.

School organization and management is taught in the same way. Instead of a theoretical textbook study of the subject previous to the beginning of practice teaching, it takes the form of learning how to manage a school by being constantly in a good school and by participating in its management. In other words, the content of the course is based entirely upon the actual problems met by the students in their teaching. Only so can it be made most vital and most effective. Too often this course is of almost no value for the reason that it is taught entirely from a textbook by an instructor in the normal school who is far from familiar with what modern schools really are. It is thus a thing apart from actual school practice, and the students find, when they go out into the real work of teaching,

that what they have been taught bears little relation to what they are required to do. More effective work will be done if students learn what they need to know of retardation and elimination by making first-hand studies of these problems in connection with the schools in which they teach; of school hygiene and sanitation by actually carrying on the activities for promoting the health of the children in the schools under their charge; of methods of marking and record keeping by the actual doing of these things in the schoolroom. In other words, the greater part of the course in school organization and management should take the form of actual contact with the problems of the schoolroom with which such a course should be concerned.

3. The theory of teaching should be taught in one course rather than in a considerable number of special-methods courses. The old-time course in general pedagogy or general methods, which still persists to a certain extent at the present time, had a very doubtful result in the development of professional ability. It was too vague and intangible to be of great value. It is a much better plan to combine, in a curriculum for training primary teachers for example, all the instruction in methods and the general theory of primary education in one course. This course should be taught by one of the most broadly educated and highly trained teachers on the faculty, who must also have had a very successful experience in teaching in the grades with which the particular curriculum deals.

There are also serious disadvantages in the plan of offering a considerable number of methods courses in the different subjects like geography, reading, and arithmetic, each given by a different person. There are especial objections to this plan if the teachers offering these courses are specialists in subject-matter only, as they often are, with a limited amount of modern training in education. The specialist in subject-matter is too often likely to have only the point of view of the specialist.

Another great disadvantage is that if a variety of methods courses are given by different people, there are sure to be many different points of view taught, and this is sure to lead to conflicting theories which will result in confusion in the minds of students. It is recognized, of course, that a variety of points of view in the right place may be a good thing, but it is doubtful if it is wise at the beginning of the training of very young teachers. It is sure to lead

to retardation in their progress in learning so complicated an art as teaching.

4. *Teachers of elementary education in a normal school must be expert teachers themselves in the grades with reference to which they teach the theory of education.* They must, however, be more than this. They must have had advanced work in education, such as is now given in good colleges of education. It is very doubtful whether a man who has never taught in the primary grades can successfully teach the theory of primary education, including special primary methods. The most desirable kind of teacher for this work is a woman who has graduated from a good normal school and who has had at least five years of experience in excellent public schools, supplemented by two years of advanced professional training in education in a good university. It is especially desirable that this advanced training should be taken after considerable experience.

NATURE OF WORK IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

One year's work is offered in educational psychology, three periods a week. One semester of this is devoted to the psychology of childhood, and the other to the psychology of the elementary-school subjects.

This course breaks sharply with that kind of psychology which deals largely with such topics as consciousness, association, perception, conception, judgment, reasoning, and volition—with somewhat detailed study of each of these topics separately, and with material of the type found in the average traditional formal textbook on general psychology, a good deal of which is abstract, philosophical, metaphysical, and speculative to such a degree that its value for young normal-school students is very doubtful. No course in general psychology is given, and it is believed to be very doubtful whether such a course is necessary or even desirable in a two-year normal-school curriculum as a prerequisite to the study of the psychology of child development.

In the course in educational psychology, an attempt is made to select, organize, and present, from the material available, some of the more significant facts of the psychology which underlies the educational practice of the elementary school. A brief scientific account is given of some of the main factors in the physical and mental growth and development of normal children which have a bearing

on methods of teaching and school management, and which will enable the teacher to deal more intelligently and more effectively with children. The significance of these facts in relation to the method and subject-matter of education is considered in an introductory way. Some of the more important experimental investigations in the field of educational psychology are reviewed.

The following brief outline indicates the nature of the material which is studied in each semester. No attempt is made here to give a complete list of the topics studied.

1. *The psychology of child development.* The physical growth and development of children; the native equipment of children in instincts and impulses as the basis for education; brief and elementary study of the constitution and action of the nervous system; original nature and its modification through growth and experience; general principles of mental development in children; psychology of motor development; psychology of thinking with emphasis upon the difference between thinking of children and adults; linguistic development in children; fundamental elements in the learning process; psychology of play; mental discipline and transfer of training; individual differences; habit and memory; the psychology of exceptional children; mental work and fatigue.

2. *The psychology of the elementary-school subjects.* This consists of a study of the psychology of reading, spelling, handwriting, arithmetic, music, drawing, geography, history, and similar subjects. Especial emphasis in this part of the course is put on economical methods of learning.

NATURE OF WORK IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

In the work in elementary education an attempt is made to formulate the educational practice of the elementary school on a scientific basis so far as possible at the present time and to teach thoroughly to students the methodology thus formulated. The subject-matter considered is organized under the following four heads, but these aspects of the course are treated simultaneously as the work advances.

1. *The problem of aim in elementary education.* The meaning of education briefly considered; discussion of social needs to be met by the elementary school; the nature and scope of the work of the elementary school; consideration of the composite aim and the various specific aims of elementary education.

2. General principles of educational practice applicable to the elementary school. The following are the main topics which receive attention under this head: motivation of school work; teaching pupils how to study; the principles and practice of drill; essential steps in teaching corresponding to appropriate aspects of the learning process; methods of securing interest and attention; the recitation.

3. The specific methodology of the elementary school. Specific and definite instruction in methods of teaching the elementary-school subjects such as reading, spelling, handwriting, arithmetic, geography, history, language, literature, music, drawing, nature study, and similar subjects; discovery of ways and means of greater economy and efficiency in teaching these subjects and the formulation of methods in accordance with discoveries of recent experimental investigations. The aim is to teach the best known scientific principles underlying teaching in the elementary school and to give them specific application. Supervised teaching in the training school on the part of students enables them to acquire skill in the use of these principles in teaching.

4. The elementary-school curriculum. This aspect of the course deals with the subject-matter of the course of study. The following topics indicate the nature and scope of the work: discovery and organization of the detailed material of the course of study; minimum essentials; relative values of various aspects of subject-matter; proper objectives and standards of attainment in each year; the specific material appropriate to each grade; preparation of the detailed material as it should be taught to the children in connection with various topics; adaptation of subject-matter to children of various planes of maturity; the elimination of obsolete and useless material.

The course in elementary education runs through three semesters in each curriculum. The first semester's work consists of an introduction to the theory and method of teaching and is based entirely upon a systematic series of observations of expert teaching in the training school. The second semester's work, also based upon observation of skilled teaching, consists of a detailed and intensive study of specific educational practice applicable to the grades with which the curriculum in question deals, with considerable attention to the subject-matter of the curriculum. The third semester's work,

taken simultaneously with supervised teaching in the training school, is based entirely upon students' teaching and gives especial attention to a study of the curriculum, and to those aspects of methodology to which the teaching of the students indicates that further attention needs to be given.

EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

A brief consideration of the following topics constitutes the course in educational sociology:

1. Study of dependent, defective, and delinquent classes and the corrective laws and institutions of Wisconsin.
2. Study of the race history and social condition of the race elements which constitute the Wisconsin population.
3. Consideration of the social justification of the different subjects in the school program.
4. Special study of the aim of elementary education; social needs to be met by the elementary school; specific social objectives in the elementary school; discussion of the content of the various studies of the elementary-school program in the light of various criteria of subject values.

SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

The course in school organization and management does not consist of a theoretical textbook study of the subject. The content of the course deals with those practical problems of organization and management which arise in the everyday work of teachers. It also considers certain modern aspects of the subject which are of somewhat recent development.

The following topics indicate the ground covered: organization and plan of the elementary school; new types of school organization; study of modern plans of grading; the problem of promotion of pupils, including a consideration of retardation and acceleration; causes of the elimination of pupils from school; the deformalization of school work; theory of school punishments and discipline; hygiene and sanitation; the daily program with reference to fatigue; recess plays and games as a factor in discipline and school management; schoolroom decoration; special classes and schools; the problem of practical arts education; the teacher's code of ethics.

This course is taught by the director of the training school, and is conducted entirely in connection with the students' teaching in the training department.

EDUCATIONAL TESTS AND MEASUREMENTS

The object of the course in educational measurements is to bring to students a practical familiarity with recent plans for measuring achievement on the part of pupils.

Among the topics which are considered are: the meaning and purpose of standards in education; methods of deriving standards; principles of scale derivation; consideration of the various standards which have been derived; especial attention to the meaning and very definite training in the practice of educational diagnosis and methods of remedial instruction; elementary discussion of the theory and practice of experimental and statistical methods of measuring efficiency in reading, handwriting, spelling, English composition, and arithmetic.

In this course the members of the class are supplied with papers which have been collected in real testing of pupils. The class is taught how to score the papers and graph the results in one period, and in the succeeding lesson they discuss the theory and principles involved. The object is to enable those taking the course to give the same tests in their own schools.

INSTRUCTORS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The work in elementary education in each of the curricula is taught by a teacher especially qualified by training and experience to do this kind of work. For example, the teacher of elementary education in the curriculum for training primary teachers is a graduate of a state normal school, has had successful experience in teaching in excellent public schools, followed by advanced training in education in a college of education, and when chosen for this position, was acting as primary critic teacher in a state normal school. It is believed that this is the type of person who can conduct a course of this kind most successfully. It is necessary that such a course should be taught by one who is an experienced teacher, but that alone will not be sufficient. Advanced professional training is also essential. The instructor must be one who has had abundant experience in teaching such subjects as music, nature study, and drawing in the particular grades in question, as well as the funda-

mental subjects like reading, spelling, and handwriting. This person must be more or less of a universal genius in connection with her own particular grades if the instruction is to be of the right sort.

Each of these instructors in elementary education is head of the department represented by one of the curricula. The school is departmentalized, not on the basis of subjects, but on the basis of the various differentiated curricula. For example, the teacher of elementary education in the primary curriculum is director of the department for training primary teachers. She is also supervisor of practice in the primary grades in the training school, and is assisted in supervision of practice by the several critic teachers in those grades. The same idea applies to the intermediate and the grammar grade department. These teachers of elementary education spend about half of their time teaching that subject and the other half in supervision of practice. They also teach a limited amount for demonstration and observation purposes in the grades of which they have charge.

The next article will deal with practice teaching.